

ANDROMACHE

*A PLAY
In Three Acts*

By

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LONDON WILLIAM HEINEMANN

MDCCCC

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PREFATORY LETTER

MY DEAR ARCHER,

The germ of this play sprang into existence on a certain April day in 1896 which you and I spent chiefly in dragging our reluctant bicycles up the great hills that surround Rivaulx Abbey, and discussing, so far as the blinding rain allowed us, the questions whether all sincere comedies are of necessity cynical, and how often we had had tea since the morning, and how far it would be possible to treat a historical subject loyally and unconventionally on a modern stage. Then we struck (as, I fear, is too often the fate of those who converse with me) on the subject of the lost plays of the Greek tragedians. We talked of the extraordinary variety of plot that the Greek dramatist found in his historical tradition, the force, the fire, the depth and richness of character-play. We thought of the marvellous dramatic possibilities of an age in which actual and living heroes and sages were to be seen moving against a background of primitive superstition and blank savagery, in which the soul of man walked more free from

PREFATORY LETTER

trappings than seems ever to have been permitted to it since But I must stop, I see that I am approaching the common pitfall of playwrights who venture upon pretences, and am beginning to prove how good my play ought to be !

What I want to remind you of is this that we agreed that a simple historical play, with as little convention as possible, placed in the Greek Heroic Age, and dealing with one of the ordinary heroic stories, ought to be, will, an interesting experiment Beyond this point, I know, we began to differ You wanted verse and the Greece of the English poets I wanted, above all things, a nearer approach to my conception of the real Greece, the Greece of history and even—dare I say it?—of anthropology ! I recognise your full right to disapprove of every word and every sentiment of this play from the first to the last, but I hope you will not judge me the pleasure of associating your name with at least the inception of the experiment, and thanking you at the same time for the many gifts of friendly encouragement and stimulating suggestion which you have bestowed upon

Yours sincerely,

GILBERT MURRAY

Fair 173 1900

D R A M A T I S P E R S O N A E

PYRRHUS	<i>Son of Achilles King of Phthia</i>
ANDROMACHEL	<i>Once wife of Hector, Prince of Troy now slave to Pyrrhus</i>
HERMIONE	<i>Daughter of Helen, Queen of Sparta wife to Pyrrhus</i>
MOLOSSUS	<i>Child of Pyrrhus and Andromache</i>
ALCIMEDON or ALCIMUS	<i>An old Captain of Achilles' Myrmidons</i>
ORESTES	<i>Son of Agamemnon, King of Mycenæ now banished for the slaying of his mother, Clytaenæstra</i>
PYLADES	<i>A Prince of Phocis, friend to Orestes</i>
A PRILST OF THETIS	
TWO MAIDS OF HERMIONE	
	<i>Certain Maidens, Myrmidons, Men at Arms</i>

The Action takes place in Phthia, on the Southern borders of Thessaly, about fifteen years after the Fall of Troy

ANDROMACHE

THE FIRST ACT

SCENE *The coast of Phthia. Rocks at the back, with the sea visible behind them. One of the rocks is a shrine, having niches cut in it for receiving offerings. On the right in front is the Altar of Thetis, shrouded in trees, to the left, a well. A path to the left leads to Pyrrhus' castle, another, far back to the right, leads to the house of the PRIFST. It is the morning twilight, with a faint glimmer of dawn.*

At the foot of the rock ORESTES is seated in meditation, he carries two spears, and wears the garb of a traveller. An ARMED MAN is moving off the stage at the back, as though going towards the sea, he stops suddenly, listens, and hides behind a rock.

A

ANDROMACHE

*Enter, coming up from the sea, PYLADES, armed
The MAN steps out*

MAN

My lord Pylades

PYLADES

Where have you left him?

MAN

Yonder, by the shrine He bade me go back to
the ship

PYLADES

[*Crossing to ORESTES*] Is it too late to turn your
purpose?

ORESTES

[*As though half roused from his reverie*] I seek
only to see if she is indeed so passing beautiful She
was, I am sure she was until—— [He pauses

PYLADES

Let me go first and spy out a way for you

ORESTES

[*With sudden recollection*] You think I am still
mad!

PYLADES

Nay, no more mad than I, but more quick to anger
It would be safer for me to go

ORESTES

You think I am still mad because I dared not say it! I will say it here by the altar [Doggedly] I will see if she is still as she used to be before the day when—[with effort]—I shed my mother's blood, and first saw—

PYLADES

Speak not Their name, brother You did nought but the gods' plain bidding You see them no more now that you are healed

ORESTES

"Twas you that feared to name them, not I!

PYLADES

Nay, you fear nothing, that is why I must fear for you

ORESTES

What is there to fear for me? Most like I shall come back just as I am

ANDROMACHE

PYLADES

That is the one thing that cannot be !

ORESTES

[*Musingly*] If she is changed as all the world else
is changed since that time — [Abruptly] I care
not for the woman I will come back If not —

[*Smiles ambiguously*

PYLADES

But why go alone, and why venture so much ? Wo
two could he hid in tho thicket by the shrine yonder,
and see her when the women come to pray at sunrise
And then —

ORESTES

[With determination, interrupting him] I will go
alone and see her and speak with her alone ! Hold
me not, friend ! Leave no man to watch over me
Keep the ship well hidden, and have twoscore men
ambushed above the cliff, to hold the path if need
comes

PYLADES

There shall be fourscore ever ready to your call,
night or day

MAN

[Coming down from path at back] My chief, the dawn is drawing close

ORESTES

Ay, get you gone before my worshippers come

PYLADES

As you will, then And Apollo be your guard!

[*Exeunt PYLADES and ARMED MAN* ORESTES
wraps his mantle round him and sits in silence

Enter from the right, PRIEST of Thetis, with a bowl in his hands He climbs a rock at the back and watches the sunrise

PRIEST

Not yet Not quite yet Ah, there it catches the flag-top now the trees —yes, there is the glint far off upon the sea! [Comes down towards the shrine and prays] Hul, Thetis! Accept this wine and honey I bring thee at first touch of dawn Keep thy Priest in wealth and honour, even as I keep thy worship And, as the sunlight drives the things of darkness from thy waters—— [Seeing ORESTES]

Averter of evil! Who is this that has sat through
the darkness under the Holy Rock? Stranger,
whence come you here?

ORESTES

From Acarnania Have I sinned in resting here?

PRIEST

No man of Phthia, for his life, would stay here in
darkness! Saw you not anything?

ORESTES

What should I see?

PRIEST

No changing manifold shapes, is of women or
winged things?

ORESTES

[*Harshly*] I saw nought but what I have seen on
a thousand nights. Enough! If I have offended
any goddess I will make amends.

*[He begins to unfasten a pendant from a gold
chain that he wears, and moves towards the
altar]*

PRIEST

Say! There is no blood upon your hands?

ORESTES

I have slain a man

PRIEST

How long since? Is the stain washed off?

ORESTES

Oh, I have been purified and purified!

PRIEST

Duly and fully—with hyssop and the blood of swine?

ORESTES

With better sacrifices than swine! I am clean enough to make amends to your goddess [Coming across to the shrine] Where shall I lay it? For I may need her favour [Holds out the gold pendant

PRIEST

[Surprised] Gold! Stranger, it is well to give gold to Thetis, but—

ORESTES

Well, I give it to Thetis!

PRIEST

Since a man in Phthia has ever touched gold, save

Pyrrhus himself and the servants of Hermione
Nor many, I should guess, in Acarnania

ORESTES

A banished man must have his wealth in little
compass

PRIEST

A chain like that should buy an exile's return

ORESTES

I care not to return

PRIEST

Are the friends of the dead so bitter against you?

ORESTES

The friends of the dead are dead, and my friends
are dead I have none to fear, but I have been
wronged, my house taken from me, and my father's
wealth, and the woman that was vowed me to wife
No more, old man! I am an exile, and I live in
happier lands than mine own

PRIEST

Is it in Phthia you seek for a happy land? No
matter affliction comes, to the good is to the evil

ORESTES

Why, what ails your city, if a stranger may know?

PRIEST

See you that shrine, and the footprint of Thetis in
the rock? Once it was all covered with offerings!

ORESTES

It is not so well loaded, nor yet so ill Is there no
worse than that?

PRIEST

Worse? Barren fields and a barren queen, and
hatred in the house of Achilles!

ORESTES

Is it some sin the King has done?

PRIEST

The King and a woman

ORESTES

[Starting] Has that sin met its punishment?
Speak plumply, Priest

PRIEST

Long years ago, Pyrrhus brought back from Troy
a slave woman to share his bed

ORESTES

[*As though reassured*] Hector's wife, Andromache,
men say

PRIEST

The wife of his father's bitterest enemy! Ay,
and she was his enemy too, and loathed her life with
Pyrrhus

ORESTES

They all struggle, these women captives But
what harm came of it?

PRIEST

She is a foe to the land and to Thetis!

ORESTES

But has he not cast her off? [*With constraint*] Men say he has wedded a new Queen, the daughter of Helen

PRIEST

Oh, the Trojan has not dwelt in the King's house
these ten years back She begged him for a hut in
the mountain, and he gave it her

ORESTES

She begged to be sent away! How was that?

PRIEST

Why should a woman wish to live in secret, and not be seen? [Slight pause] There be wise women among the barbarians

ORESTES

Wise in bad drugs and magic, I knew no other wisdom in them

PRIEST

You have said it! There is a prophet hero who knows of counter charms—I give him three ewes for this that I wear—[showing a charm made of wolves' teeth]—else I durst not face her!

ORESTES

Whom has she chiefly hurt?

PRIEST

Men say she has waked the dead Hector to come to her across the seas! [He shudders] But for the King, we should have judged her long ago

ORESTES

Does the new Queen hate her?

PRIEST

Has she not blighted the womb of the Queen?
There is no heir to Achilles in Achilles' land!

ORESTES

And does Pyrrhus sit still while his Queen is thus wronged?

PRIEST

Cannot a witch blind the eyes? He can see nothing, and will hearken to nothing. Even now he has taken the Trojan woman's bastard with him

ORESTES

Is Pyrrhus away from the land? Where?

PRIEST

He has gone hunting in the hills yonder—[pointing]
—and down to the fields of the Napyans

ORESTES

When should he return?

PRIEST

To-day, it may be—it is the fifth day of the hunt,
or perchance the game may keep him some time yet

[Enter ALCIMEDON, L., an old man with spears but no armour, he carries a bunch of violets for Thetis] The witch woman is mad lest any hurt come to the boy !

ALCIMEDON

Health to you, Priest, and discretion to your tongue !

PRIEST

Health I accept, Alcimedon,—discretion to them that need it !

ORESTES

[To the PRIEST] Why, what should bring hurt to the lad ?

ALCIMEDON

[Carelessly, passing on] Jealousy stranger Priests and barren women !

[He passes on to the altar, and then to the rock, where he puts his violets

PRIEST

Jealousy !

ORESTES

[Involuntarily] Hermione would never plot against the boy !

[He makes an angry movement after ALCIMEDON

PRIEST

What jealousy? What need to be jealous of him? He is no true heir. We have a King, and we have a Queen, both of the blood of Zeus, both our two rulers, but heir there is none.

ALCIMEDON

[*Seeing and handling the gold link*] Ye golden gods, have the sons of Paetus come to Phthia?

ORESTES

[*In sudden anger*] The curse of the crawling lichen on the man who moves that gold!

ALCIMEDON

On your own head! [*Throws gold quickly down*] Who are you, stranger, to curse one that has done you no wrong?

ORESTES

I check the wrong before it is done. And I tell not my name save to my host after I have eaten and slept.

ALCIMEDON

If you come to teach your manners to the Myrmidons, by Thetis' you shall learn them first. Is the stranger yours, O Priest?

ORESTES

I have broken no man's bread nor touched his hand [Defiantly] What see you more?

ALCIMEDON

Why is he so bold? Has he sanctuary with Thetis?

ORESTES

[*Lifting his two spears*] This is my sanctuary
And there is more gold for the man that will break through it

PRIEST

Stay! Stay not the stranger so fast, Alcimedon
Reason with him He will give up the chain, and we will let him go in peace

ALCIMEDON

Go in peace, when he has lifted his spear against Alcimedon! How shall I look my grandchildren in the face? By Thetis! I will wash the chain with his blood!

PRIEST

Beware, he has spears! It is man to man

[*Noise of footsteps* ORESTES puts his back towards a rock, so that neither he nor ALCI-

MEDON sees ANDROMACHE, the MAID, and two other damsels, who enter with pitchers on their heads

ALCIMEDON

[With his eye on ORESTES] Ha! who comes there?
 [Calling to the newcomers without looking at them]
 A stranger in arms, and with gold! Ho! My
 midons!

ANDROMACHE

Shame on you, Alcimedon, robber of strangers!

ALCIMEDON

Is it you? [Yielding reluctantly] Nay, he is no
 man's guest, it is lawful to slay him

ANDROMACHE

He is mine [To ORESTES] Stranger, give me
 your right hand [To ALCIMEDON] He is my guest

ORESTES

[Still stormy and excited] Shall I take a woman's
 hand for fear of this old loon? My spear-blade is
 dry and has not drunk

PRIEST

Stranger, you are alone, a wise man chooses
 peace, and not war

ORESTES

Alone? As a wolf among sheep is alone When he slays first the dog—[*pointing spear at ALCIMEDON*] —and bleeds the sheep as he will!

ANDROMACHE

And who will be the better when he has bled them? Nay, old friend—[*to ALCIMEDON, who wants to break in, then to ORESTES again*]—though you slay us all, you have but lost the food and shelter we had given you, and the shedder of blood escapes not the Dread Watchers

ORESTES

[Who had been cooling, starts and threatens her] What know you of the Dread Watchers?

ANDROMACHE

And there is little glory in the slaying of a woman, and little gun

ORLIES

[Wildly] What woman? Who are you that taunt me? Priest, is this your witch?

ALCIMEDON

[Angrily] She is no witch! You lie, both stranger and priest!

ANDROMACHE

I am a bondwoman of the King

ALCIMEDON

Andromache, once wife of Hector, Prince of Troy

ORESTES

And am I to be the guest of a bondwoman?

ANDROMACHE

There are others of free estate who will take you
in I only sought to save men's lives

ORESTES

What worth are men's lives? I will be guest to
none but the King

ANDROMACHE

One of these will guide you, when you will, to
Pyrrhus' castle

ORESTES

[Relating suddenly] Oh, let me be

[He sits down on a rock, and buries his face in
his hands]

ANDROMACHE

[*To ALCIMEDON*] The man is very weary and sore at heart, Alcimedon

PRIEST

It may be he is mad It is well we hurt him not

ALCIMEDON

Banishment may make a man well-nigh mad I remember the year of my own manslaying

ANDROMACHE

Perchance he has been long alone in the forests Take him and give him food and drink

ALCIMEDON

The priest can take him I want no more of the man

ORESTES

[*Wearily*] Nay, touch me not Leave me awhile

PRIEST

[*To the others*] It is well Make your prayers

ANDROMACHE

[*Approaching the altar, and praying with upstretched*

hands] Greeting to thee and joy, Thetis, mother of all Phthia! Give us peace in this land, and grant that my son Molossus return safe, and grow to give joy to thee and all this house!

ALCIMEDON

[*In the same way*] Joy to thee, Thetis! Accept my offerings, and grant that my arms keep strong, and that I find the man whose swine have trampled my barley field

MAID

It will be a long day before Thetis grants you that, old man

ALCIMEDON

[*Grumbling*] If I only knew of any one that knew!

PRIEST

[*To FIRST MAID*] Have you a prayer to make?

MAID

[*Taking offerings from other MAIDS to add to his own.*] Hail, Thetis! and may joy be ever with thee! Accept these offerings from the bondmaids Aithra, and Phloe, and Deianassa, and grant all good things to them and theirs

{A pause}

ALCIMEDON

The jade! She is praying in silence! Ho, stop her, Priest!

[*The others giggle*

MAID

'Tis as good as a witch's prayer, at the worst!

ALCIMEDON

[*Taking hold of her and threatening her with the shaft of his spear*] Say it aloud, now! Say what it was!

MAID

I won't! I won't! Let me be It was no harm

ANDROMACHE

Let her be

ALCIMEDON

Swear it was nothing touching me, nor my crops, nor those swine!

MAID

By Thetis! I think not of you, nor your crops nor your swine!

ORESTES

[*Recovering from his reverie*] Well, lead me in I will be the guest of any that will take me

PRIEST

You have given an offering, stranger, you may
pray if you will

ORESTES

I—to Thetis! No! Yet perhaps— [Going up
to altar] Hail, Thetis! I have given thee an offer-
ing of many oxen's price, and many more will I give
if thou hinder me not of my desires

ALCIMEDON

A vile prayer, a very dangerous prayer! He might
as well have prayed silently I will not take the
man, the Priest may take him

[The PRIEST goes towards ORESTES]

ORESTES

[Looking about and scanning the faces] I will be
this bondwoman's guest

ANDROMACHE

So be it, stranger [The PRIEST moves anxiously
towards ORESTES] And perchance the Priest will
give you shelter till my work is done

PRIEST

Av, come with me When the King returns it

were meetier that he should take you [Aside to ORESTES] Beware, stranger! It is the Phrygian woman

ORESTES

[Apart to PRIEST] She is over-wise, methinks, but not evil I fear her not [Coming back as though on impulse] I give you my hand, wife of Hector!

ANDROMACHE

It is well, my guest [Taking his hand]

PRIEST

Till the King returns!

[Exit PRIEST and ORESTES]

ALCIMEDON

[As ANDROMACHE and the women draw water at the well] Lazy hounds, to let Hector's wife draw water! Fill her pails for her, little foxes!

FIRST MAID

Better she fill mine! Perhaps she knows charms for filling them

ANDROMACHE

It is well, fellow slave Let our work be even

Enter, by the path from the Castle, HERMIONE, with two attendants carrying libations She does not notice the slaves

ALCIMEDON

Greeting, O Queen

HERMIONE

Greeting, old man [Going up to the altar] Hail, Thetis, and have joy! Accept this wine and the blood of an ewe with two limbs that I bring to thee, and take off from me, I beseech—— [She stops, looks round, and sees ANDROMACHE, on whom she turns with vehemence] You?

[Flings out the blood on the ground

ALCIMEDON

Queen, you have flung out the blood upon the ground!

HERMIONE

What would my sacrifice profit, with that woman's eyes upon me? [To ANDROMACHE] Get you back to the castle! Is the water not drawn yet?

ANDROMACHE

I go, O Queen!

ALCIMEDON

You are over-proud, my Queen, over-proud

HERMIONE

May a Queen in Phthia not give commands to her own slaves?

MAID

[*At the shrine*] Holy Aphrodite! some one has put gold upon the shrine!

ALCIMEDON

"Twas a stranger that the Priest has taken in
Have a care the dog laid a curse on any who should move it

HERMIONE

A stranger! He comes from the South, then, from Athens, or Argos, or Mycen'e——

ALCIMEDON

No, Queen, he is only in Acarnanian But belike he has journeyed to the South

HERMIONE

That is no Acarnanian gold! [*Taking it up*] See you the sea-beast wrought on it, with many feet?

[*To Maid*

MAID

Yes, but the curse, Queen——

HERMIONE

[*Not heeding her*] It brings my home back to me
In Lacedemon we all wore chains of gold about our
necks

MAID

Queen, the man laid a curse upon it!

HERMIONE

[*Putting it back*] I meant no evil, and that dear
gold of the South will never hurt me—— In Aga-
memnon's palace the men had gold in their armour,
and even in the blades of their swords! And the
gold was wrought into lions and wild bulls and trees,
and strange sea beasts like this

ALCIMEDON

A plain haft and a plain blade cuts the steadiest

HERMIONE

[*Angrily*] Bah! You deem because you are nude
you are valiant, Alcimedon! The soldiers of the
South were as brave as you

ALCIMEDON

[*Turning away towards the maidens*] Let not Andromache draw the water, jades!

HERMIONE

Will you not draw for her yourself, old man?

ALCIMEDON

I drew water! [*Drawing himself up in indignation*] By Heimes! I care not for the tongue of a barren woman

[*Voice and the loud talk of huntsmen are heard outside*

VOICE OF MOLOSSUS

Ho! Mother, Mother!

MAID

[*Looking*] It is Molossus! And the King's huntsmen They are coming up the path

ALCIMEDON

Already!

HERMIONE

[*To ANDROMACHE, who has stopped*] Why do you wait? Have I not bidden you back to the castle?

And when the hall is swept, go to your own house
 Come not up to trouble the King till that web is
 finished

ANDROMACHE

[*Turning again and moving away*] I go, O Queen

VOICE OF PYRRHUS

[*Outside*] Ho, wife of Hector, mother of Molossus !
 Stay, and look at him

Molossus and Pyrrhus enter, with some spearmen,
 Pyrrhus has his arm on the neck of Molossus

MOLOSSUS

[*Running forward*] Mother, look ! I have slain a
 man !

PYRRHUS

He has slain his first man

[Molossus holds up his hands, the palms of
 which are smeared with blood]

MOLOSSUS

See, mother, they have smeared me with his
 blood !

HELMONE

[*Holding aloof*] Keep away from the altar, with
 foul hands !

ANDROMACHE

[*To Pyrrhus, with reproach, while she embraces Molossus*] You said you would take him to no battles, only to hunting

PYRRHUS

[*Cheerily*] By Hermes, it was he who made the battle! I meant nothing but hunting

ALCIMEDON

Well done, boy! A true prince, a true prince!

PYRRHUS

We had driven the deer down over the mountains and we came on a herd of the Neapolitan cattle grazing, right up on the moors

ANDROMACHE

You promised me you would raid no cattle with him

PYRRHUS

By Hermes! They *came* to us! And the herd-boy never saw us, he was sitting on a stone in the sun, and thinking of nothing. And even then I would not raid the cattle. When suddenly up jumped the herd-boy and looked at us, with his mouth open

And before he knew who we were, I heard a twang!
—and there he was with an arrow in his neck!

[Laughs]

MOLLOSSUS

Right through his throat, mother! He was looking up [Imitating the attitude] And I have got a pipe he was plaiting It wasn't finished, but it blows

[He shows a pipe made of reeds

PYRRHUS

You can play better things than pipes, my boy
So we ran down and cut off the cattle, and I have given them to Molossus for his own herd

MOLLOSSUS

And father put the blood on my hands himself

PYRRHUS

I will do more for you than that, my firstborn

HERMIONE

[Who has leapt back, by the altar] Take up your pitcher, and begone, woman!

PYRRHUS

[Turning upon HERMIONE] Now, by Pelens, daughter of Helen, what would you?

HERMIONE

That when my slave is gone you may give me greeting

PYRRHUS

I give you greeting But I praise not your greeting to me

HERMIONE

If I send my women to draw water at sunrise, shall the water not be back when the shadows are thus?

[Pointing to shadows]

PYRRHUS

There be other women meetier to draw water than Hector's wife I tell you there is no man on this earth I should so joy to have slain as Hector

HERMIONE

If he had witchwork to help him, he may have been a deadly fighter

ANDROMACHE

[To PYRRHUS, who has laid his hand on her shoulder]
Nay, master, the hall must be made ready

PYRRHUS

Well, take our boy, and be with him at the castle when I come Stay, think of a boon to ask of me in

return for the day's good work And make it a rich
boon, I shall not stint you

ANDROMACHE

I know it now, but I fear to anger my lord

PYRRHUS

Ask on, yet I would not have you ask for freedom
from me

ANDROMACHE

My master, what could I do now with freedom?
Only suffer Molossus to make atonement to the
Napaeans for the man he slew He may give back the
oxen, and I will add of my own

PYRRHUS

[*Displeased*] Atonement! Who are the Napaeans
to seek atonement from me?

ANDROMACHE

Nay, my lord, it was scarce a righteous slaying

PYRRHUS

Not righteous! [Scornfully] Then perchance
you would have me cut off the herd boy's hands

and feet, for fear his ghost should come after us? Not righteous! What is it you fear?

ANDROMACHE

[Putting her hand on Molossus' shoulder] He is but a boy, my lord! And if there is no atonement, they will watch day and night to slay him

MOLOSSUS

Mother, I fear them not!

ANDROMACHE

They will raid us again—

PYRRHUS

I can do them twice and four times the hurt they can do me

ANDROMACHE

They cannot hurt us in our castle, but they can burn the villages in the plain and make dearth and famine

MOLOSSUS

Oh, Mother, why should I make atonement for my first man?

PYRRHUS

It was only a boy, too I cannot ask forgiveness for one boy!

ANDROMACHE

It will cost little I have three carpets of Sidon
work—

PYRRHUS

And the oxen! I have given them to the lad,
and one is already eaten Well, well, it is for the
lad to say if he will give back his oxen and ask for
pardon

HERMIONE

[With a ring of emotion in her voice] Shall my
chests be made empty because your slave's child is
afraid?

MOLOSSUS

I am not afraid I will never atone!

PYRRHUS

[To HERMIONE] Peace, O Queen! *[To ANDROMACHE]* Go! If Molossus wills, he can make his
atonement On to the castle men!

[Exeunt spearmen]

ANDROMACHE

[Turning as she goes off] Be not wroth, my King
Your hall would be very desolate if the boy were
slain

[Exeunt ANDROMACHE and MOLOSSUS]

HERMIONE

There is another atonement should come first if you must humble yourself

PYRRHUS

[*Stopping as he is going off*] What other?

HERMIONE

Atone to Orestes, Agamemnon's son, that you stole away his bride!

PYRRHUS

[*Flinging up and laying his hand on his dagger*] Daughter of a dog! I stole no man's bride

HERMIONE

Was I not vowed and sworn to Orestes?

PYRRHUS

You father vowed you, not I. What is it to me if your father broke his oaths?

HERMIONE

You helped him and bribed him to break them
The wrath of the Broken Oath is on both of you!

PYRRHUS

You are mad, woman Orestes had murdered his mother, and the Spirits without Name haunted him day and night——

HERMIONE

My father knew that when he betrothed me He could be purified

PYRRHUS

[Scornfully] Purified? For slaying his mother?

HERMIONE

And you, you dared not enter the land while Agamemnon's son was there, you waited till——

PYRRHUS

'Twas your father cozened Orestes away How should I see Agamemnon's son? Am I not the son of Achilles?

HERMIONE

And was Achilles a better man than Agamemnon?

PYRRHUS

All the world knows he was

HERMIONE

Then why did all the world choose Agamemnon to be their king?

PYRRHUS

Bah! Very feeble men may be kings

HERMIONE

They may, in Phthia, and beggarly men, and savage, and witch ridden, and makers of atonement, and stealers of wives!

PYRRHUS

By Peleus! if I stole you, you were willing 'Tis yourself you mark with a dog's name, Helen's daughter!

HERMIONE

God be witness, willing I never was! Though I dreamed not then that I should come to a beggared land and the house of a master who hated me!

[Flings herself down by the altar, hidden from the back of the stage by the trees]

PYRRHUS

By Thetis, woman, you are bewitched!

HERMIONE

[With a cry] Bewitched! Have I not said it?

Enter from R back, PRIEST and ORESTES

PRIEST

[To ORESTES] Here is the King himself! [To PYRRHUS] Son of Achilles, I bring you this stranger, whom your handmaid, Andromache, commended to my care

PYRRHUS

Whence comes he, and what seeks he?

PRIEST

From Acarnania, banished for the slaying of a man

PYRRHUS

He seeks not purification?

ORESTES

The blood is fated long ago from my hand I seek but to rest a while at your castle, I will give payment either in battle with your enemies, or by tidings and songs from beyond Parnassus and the Waters of Pelops

[HERMIONE looks up in amazement at the voice,
uttering a stifled cry and peers round

PYRRHUS

It is well stranger Tidings are good in peace,

and if war comes, an exile for manslaying may well
be worth the bread he eats

ORESTES

Others know if I am skilled in war I know only
that my life is little worth to me, and I care not
much to save it

PYRRHUS

A good word, Sir Guest, and worthy of the roof of
Achilles We give you greeting, my Queen and I
[*Shakes his hand, and looks round for HERMIONE*] Daugter of Helen, have you not seen our guest?

HERMIONE

[*In a startled tone*] Seen him? What do you
mean, my lord?

ORESTES

Nay, though methinks I have heard the Queen's
praises till it is almost as though I knew her For
the women of the South speak daily of Helen's
daughter, and the birds and kings' sons will never
forget her

HERMIONE

[*Mastering her agitation with difficulty*] You know
the land of Pelops, stranger? It is a fair land

ORESTES

Once it was far the fairest upon earth But now
 its pride is brought down, and that which made it
 beautiful is departed [He looks steadily at her]

PYRRHUS

Ay, they have had their troubles in the South
 Howbeit, with us you may stay in peace as long as
 your pleasure is Daughter of Helen, give your hand
 to our guest, and guide him to the castle

HERMIONE

[Moving her hand forward, then drawing back] Let
 another guide him I have yet a prayer unspoken,
 and my offering is poured

PYRRHUS

[Displeased] Be not vexed, stranger Who can
 tell the prayers of a childless woman, save that they
 change and are very many? Come with me, and
 to-morrow we will ask your name and race

[Exeunt PYRRHUS and ORESTES, L The PRIEST
 looks to the niches in the rock to see the offer-
 ings HERMIONE falls on her knees at the
 altar, and prays silently]

THE SECOND ACT

SCENE *The Hall of Pyrrhus' Castle, a rude stone building, with spears, swords, and armour hanging on the walls A doorway in the back wall leads to the courtyard At the extreme right is a fire burning, near it are two high seats for the King and Queen*

On a bench near the door are ANDROMACHE and Molossus seated, on the floor near them is a small pile of carpets and tapestries, and a bowl with some metal ornaments and small weapons in it

ANDROMACHE

But when you saw him fall, and saw the pain in his face, did it give you no grief?

MOLLOSSUS

A little, it may be Not more than when I struck

my first deer A child might cry over the ox they
are slaying now in the yard

ANDROMACHE

And a grown man, too, if it waited anything

MOLOSSUS

Mother, you are but a woman, and I am getting
to be a man, I must grow past all that and throw it
behind me

*Enter ORESTES unnoticed he stands in the doorway,
leaning against a pillar*

ANDROMACHE

May your eyes never see half the pain mine
have seen! I grew past feeling for it too, long, long
ago I saw men writhe and bite the dust, without
caring for them or counting them They were so
many that they were all confused, and the noise of
their anguish was like the crying of ewes far off,
there was no one voice in it, and no meaning And
then, as it went on growing, and the sons of Priam
died about me and the folk starved and my husband,
Hector, was slain with torment, all the voices gathered
again together and seemed as one voice, that cried to
my heart so that it understood

MOLOSSUS

What did it say, mother?

ANDROMACHE

It spoke in a language that you know not, my son

MOLOSSUS

Did it speak Phrygian?

ANDROMACHE

It spoke the language of old, old men, and those
whose gods have deserted them

*[ORESTES moves forward as though to speak, but
checks himself]*

MOLOSSUS

But you could tell me what it said

ANDROMACHE

[Looking at him, and not answering] Why did you
ever wish to kill that herd-boy?

MOLOSSUS

We had taken their cattle before They always
fight us

ANDROMACHE

Would it not be better that they should live at peace with you?

MOLOSSUS

Why should I fear their blood-feud? I would sooner be slain than ask favours of them. My father would avenge me well!

ANDROMACHE

And who will be the happier? Listen. Can you hear that little beating sound—down seaward, away from the sun?

MOLOSSUS

It is the water lapping against the rocks.

ANDROMACHE

There is a sound like that in the language I told you of. Old, old men, and those whose gods have deserted them, hear it in their hearts—the sound of all the blood that men have spilt and the tears they have shed, lapping against great rocks, in shadow, away from the sun.

H.

MOLOSSUS

Again t' mother, no warrior hears any sound like my heart so

ANDROMACHE

Hector learnt to hear it before he died

ORESTES

[Coming forward] Before he died! Is that its meaning?

ANDROMACHE

The stranger!

[Tutting]

ORESTES

Does it mean death, that sound?

ANDROMACHE

Nay, methinks a man hears it when he has suffered enough, if he has the right ear to hear it

ORESTES

But it is then that death should come, when a man has suffered enough

ANDROMACHE

Nay, death should not come for suffering Death should come when there is no hope left for any one thing in the world

ORESTES

[Broodingly] One thing!

Molossus

But, Mother, they called Hector "Slayer of Men"
 I want first to slay many, many men, and many wild
 beasts, and burn a town, that people may fear me,
 and call me "Slayer of Men" And after that—after
 that, I will be merciful, and slay only those I hate

ANDROMACHE

Shall you hate men still?

Molossus

If they wrong me! [ANDROMACHE smiles] Shall
 I not hate them that wrong me? Do you not your
 self?

ANDROMACHE

Light of my age, if I hated, how should I live?
 There are three living souls that I love—you and
 your father and old Alcimus. And if I hated, whom
 should I hate more bitterly?

Molossus

I know my father was your enemy once But
 what did old Alcimus?

ANDROMACHE

He was one of the three who slew my little child

MOLOSSUS

Astyanax? [She nods] I wish Astyanax were alive, mother I would take him hunting — He would have no share, would he, in my heritage?

ANDROMACHE

I know nothing of that

MOLOSSUS

And did you never hate them—not at the time?

ANDROMACHE

[Looking at him, then passing her hand across her face] Oh yes, I hated them!

MOLOSSUS

But not me! I never did much harm to you

ANDROMACHE

Some day perhaps you will hurt me worse than any of them, but I shall not hate you

MOLOSSUS

[After a pause, handling the objects in the bowl] Well, I give you my oath this time, Mother, but I will not atone for my next slaying

Enter ALCIMEDON and Attendants

ALCIMEDON

The bull is finished, and a fine beast he was
 [Seeing the bowl] What is this?

MOLLOSSUS

[Shamefaced] Nothing Some pieces of mother's
 old stores

ANDROMACHE

The price for the blood of the herd boy

MOLLOSSUS

She made me vow it!

ALCIMEDON

The atonement? That is right I feared that
 Pyrrhus would be too proud to pay it

MOLLOSSUS

You need not think that I wanted him to pay it!

ALCIMEDON

H'm! That was how I talked once, before I knew
 what a blood feud we And now I would pay a
 dead man's weight in silver to be clear of one Of

course, with a stranger it is different, or a man who has no kin [Examining the stores] No need to pry too much, though It was a little boy, they tell me, and poorly clad

MOLOSSUS

[Almost crying] He was a big boy!—I hate the Napæans, and I will slay more of them!

ALCIMEDON

There are the oxen as well We have killed two but sorry beasts, both, sorry beasts Any two calves will more than make up for them

MOLOSSUS

But I hate them!

ALCIMEDON

I hate them your fill, but make up the feud we must not have Pyrrhus left childless

MOLOSSUS

What is it to me if Pyrrhus is childless? He can avenge his children

ALCIMEDON

Peace is better

MOLOSSUS

[Contemptuously] Peace!

ORESTES

And what is the road to peace? The hate must eat itself out, till it stays for weariness

ALCIMEDON

A long road, stranger, too long and too rough to the feet We want peace now!

ORESTES

How can you get peace now, when the blood is still wet? He may give all his silver and his fine, but he will hate the men whose blood he has drunk, and though they swear by all the gods of their valley, they will hate him And hate will out, in time, one way or another

MOLOSSUS

If ever they swerve a hair's breadth from their oaths—

ALCIMEDON

And is there to be no peace at all?

ORESTES

Peace for this one—[touching Molossus]—when Pyrrhus is childless, or when—

ALCIVEDON

Your words on your own head !

ORESTES

—when the last of the Napæans has gone from
tho earth

ANDROMACHE

Nay, no peace then

ORESTES

Not for the dead ?

ANDROMACHE

Do not men see the dead forming tho world, and
hear them call for blood ?

ORESTES

[Excitedly] How know you, woman, that the Dead
call for blood ? [Gloomily again] When the whole
of a race is gone there may perhaps be peace

ANDROMACHE

But the whole of a race is never gone Even from
Troy there are men escaped who may make cities and
seek for vengeance again And if you blot out all
the Napæans, there are those beyond the Napæans

who will hate you for that very thing Make peace, swiftly, before you die, my son, lest there be no peace for ever and ever

Enter HERMIONE, with PRIEST of Thetis and Attendants she is richly dressed, and her eyes bright and anxious She passes up to the two high seats, and takes one She talks with her MAIDS, and ALCIMEDON goes over to her

ORESTES

[*Detaching another pendant from his chain*] Woman, you can see men's hearts, and you talk not as these talk Behold, there is no peace, for peace is nothing, there is either Love or Hate [*Throwing pendant into the bowl*] If gold can buy love where hate is, put that to the blood gift!

HERMIONE.

[*To ORESTES, across the hall*] Sir Stranger, this Priest tells me you are skilled in a bud

ORESTES

I have little skill in music, but I have journeyed much

HERMIONE

You can tell us strange tales of your voyages?

ORESTES

Not of my own But I was telling this boy a tale
even now

HERMIONE

Nay, no boys' tales! Andromache, take your son
and help with the ox flesh [To ORESTES] And sit
not so far off, among the slaves' seats Tell us some
man's story

ORESTES

[Approaching, but bringing Molossus with him,
while ANDROMACHE goes out] Nay, I will keep the boy
It is a boy's tale, this, and of little meaning
But seeing I have begun—— [To Molossus] Have
you heard of a man that once had a great feud—
Orestes, Agamemnon's son?

MOLOSSUS

Who slew his mother, and was driven by——

PRIEST

Nay, name them not, child, name not those Holy
Ones

ALCIMEDON

We love not his name in this house, stranger
Have you no other tale?

HERMIONE

[Controlling her excitement] Nay, what hurt is his name? It is only some boy's tale

ORESTES

He took on him a great feud, greater than he knew
 For his father called from the dead for vengeance on
 the woman who had murdered him And the gods
 called, too, and put voices always about him calling
 for blood And then they betrayed him!

MOLOSSUS

Did his father betray him, too?

ORESTES

Nay, it may be that the voice was not his father's,
 after all But the gods—

PRIEST

See that your tongue offend not, stranger!

ORESTES

So be it Well, in the end he recked not of the
 gods He cared not how sore they hated him, and
 cared not if he lived or died

MOLLOSSUS

And what did he do ?

ORESTES

This is the last story I heard of him, from a Chalcidian man who had been in Sicily

HERMIONE

Had he gone so far away ?

ORESTES

Beyond the end of Sicily to a kingdom of the Iberians For he vowed that he would be like Paris, and win the most beautiful of all women for his wife, for, you must know, the gods had marred all the world for him, and made it all as ashes in his mouth, except beauty For beauty is immortal, like themselves, and they cannot hurt it So he sought and questioned where that woman might be, and men said she was queen of a land among the Iberians

HERMIONE

[*Half divining his meaning*] Had he seen her himself ?

ORESTES

Ay, long ago, they said

HERMIONE

And did he too deem her so fair ?

ORESTES

[*Looking full at her*] More beautiful than the flowers, and the sunlight, so that in dreams her eyes haunted him

MOLOSSUS

Well, and what did he do ?

ORESTES

He took his ship, with a hundred men well armed, and hid them in a bay of Ibleum. And he went up alone to the king's castle and saw the woman. For he was not sure if she was really so beautiful, and wanted to see her again very close. So he stayed in the king's house and made a plot to bear her away.

MOLOSSUS

But what happened ?

ORESTES

I said it was but a boy's story. The Chalcidian knew not what had happened. Some said he won the queen to his ship, and fled away, wandering, and some said she told the king of his plotting, and they

slew him there in the banquet hall [A slight pause] So perchance even Orestes has found his peace, or, perchance he is still an outcast man, with a new feud following him

MOLLOSSUS

But I wish I knew

ORESTES

Oh, 'tis a foolish story, without an ending

HERMIONE

[Breaking out from her suspense, recklessly] And a poor fool, your Orestes, whatever befell!

ORESTES

How so? What if he won the woman?

HERMIONE

He only fled on the seas with her, an exiled man, with no comfort Could he not get him a kingdom?

ORESTES

Belike he cared not for a little kingdom, being once robbed of his own great kingdom

HERMIONE

If a high seat is empty, shall not a great king's

son be bold to sit on it? Were his men good soldiers of Mycene?

ORESTES

Some, of Mycene, who had sieked Troy, some, pirates he had got in his voyaging, all good fighters!

HERMIONE

Could he not slay that Iberian in his halls, and sit upon his seat?

ALCIMEDON

By Thetis! that would have been a gallant deed

PRIEST

Unrighteous, very unrighteous, but doubtless the Iberian would have sinned aginst some god!

ORESTES.

The Iberians may be brave fighters, I know not
And he knew of none to help him

ALCIMEDON

A hundred good Phthians might have tried it

HERMIONE.

The queen might have had her own friends who would fight for her

ALCIMEDON

A very foul deed, very foul, but a gallant one !
 And if she would leave her lord—the hound !—she
 might well help to slay him !

ORESTES

He did not seek her for her righteousness, he
 sought her because her beauty spoke like a god to
 him !

[A moment's pause A shout of several voices
 heard in the Court

ALCIMEDON

What is that shouting ?

[Moves towards door, with Molossus, the Prisoner
 follows

HERMIONE

I heard the King's voice in it [To her MAIDS]
 Go, quick See what has happened [They also go
 towards the door, leaving HERMIONE and ORESTES alone
 An instant of silence, then she makes a quick move
 ment to him] Oh, speak !

ORESTES

Either I will take you this night or I will be slain
 here in the hall !

HERMIONE

Oh, take me, take me! I am half dead with weeping!

ORESTES

You shall weary no more Go forth alone at midnight to the altar of Thetis——

HERMIONE

The altar of Thetis—by night! [She shows fear

ORESTES

What do you fear? [Hermione shudders, but does not answer] You dare not? Then, let it end the other way!

HERMIONE

Dare you slay him?

ORESTES

That is no great thing!

HERMIONE

And the witch, and the witch-child?

[With frightened ferocity

ORESTES

Slay her?

HERMIONE

You will not? You will not? Oh, then, I dare not go to you!

[ORESTES looks at her with surprise and some repulsion, the women and ALCIMUS return, followed by PYRRHUS and MOLOSSUS, with some armour after them ANDROMACHE and some retainers]

MAID

A gift for Molossus! The King has given him a helmet and shield and spear!

MOLOSSUS

And greaves, too, with bronze rims!

PYRRHUS

Not yet, my boy! [As MOLOSSUS would fit a greave on] Bad luck before a banquet

ALCIMUS

Wait till the morning, my lad!

PYRRHUS

[With sudden displeasure, seeing the blood-gifts] What mean all these carpets, and the bowl yonder?

ANDROMACHE

They are gifts for the atonement

PYRRHUS

Atonement—to those dogs!

ANDROMACHE

My King, it was the boon you granted me

PYRRHUS

[*Turning towards Molossus*] The boy never consented!

MOLLOSSUS

I—verily I liked it not—but I gave my word
Mother made me

PYRRHUS

You have just slain a man, and a woman can
frighten you to promising your own dishonour?

MOLLOSSUS

She did not frighten me, she—I know not how
she did it!

HERMIONE

[*With a laugh*] Others can guess well enough how
she did it!

FIRST MAID

[*Muttering*] Sorceress!

SECOND MAID

[*The same*] Phrygian witch!

ALCIMUS

Hold your peace, little prating foxes!

FIRST MAID

Oh, we all know she has witched old Alcimedon,
long ago

MOLOSSUS

[*Half crying, as Pyrrhus stands gloomily silent*] I would not make atonement to them, Father, for all
the world!

PYRRHUS

She has your word now, little fool, and mine
likewise—By the gods, woman, you have got your
will, and shamed me in the eyes of all men

ANDROMACHE

Master, your honour is more to me than mine own
This thing shames you not, even Alcimedon deemed
it wise and honourable

ALCIMUS

The boy is very young, if he were a man, behike—

HERMIONE

Is Alcimedon the judge of his lord's honour?

ANDROMACHE

But how should I over seek to hurt your honour?
Why should I wish it?

PRIEST

[*As Pyrrhus goes silently back to the throne*] A
burborian woman never forgets a hurt

FIRST MAID

'Tis the spite of a conquered Phrygian

HERMIONE

Let her be, King! She is thinking ever of her
Hector, and Astyminx whom you slew!

ANDROMACHE

My lord—

PYRRHUS

Peace, peace! She knows well enough that Hector
is dead—and beyond the seas too Though I were

shamed to the dirt in mine own hall, Hector would not hear of it!

HERMIONE

Are you sure?

PRIEST

Hector himself is buried beyond the seas, but his ghost may have followed your ships to Phthia
[Coming up to the throne] Yet, son of Achilles, though you like not my counsel, there be witches in Phrygia that can wake the dead, and tell them of shame come to their enemies, or of —

ALCIMUS

There be none such in Phthia, old man! And if the dead *should* wake, your prating would even set them to sleep again

[Laughter, in which PYRRHUS slightly joins

PYRRHUS

"Tis well said, Alcimedon! These women and priests!

PRIEST

Nay, but I *will* speak!

[Talks to PYRRHUS, round whom a group gathers, leaving ANDROMACHE alone, and ORESTES near ALCIMEDON]

OFLSTES

[*To Alcimedon*] Old man, you have seen Helen? Was she more beautiful than your Queen?

ALCIMUS

[*Looking towards Hermione, then brightening*] Nay, this is a woman like mother, Helen was goddesslike, deathless and ageless for ever!

OFLSTES

[*To himself*] For Helen I could have done it! Alcimedon, did yonder woman ever do Helen my great wrong, anything meet for vengeance?

ALCIMUS

Andromache? Why, twas Helen did her all the wrong!

OFLSTES

Even so, and therefore she must have hated her. Did she never seek, think you, to have Helen slain?

ALCIMUS

I know not! Why, she gave her home and shelter when the folk of Troy sought to stone her.

ORESTES

[*Brooding*] If she had ever plotted against Helen,
I could have done it

PYRRHUS

[*Shaking off the Priest*] Enough enough!—Is
your stranger in the hall, Andromache?

ANDROMACHE

He is here, my lord, a man of good counsel,
methinks, and like to be faithful to his guest oath

PYRRHUS

He is happily come to a night of festival—Stranger,
you stand far from the fire

[ORESTES and HERMIONE have been trying to read
one another's faces. Here ORESTES turns
bitterly, looks to the suits of armour on the
wall, and chooses a seat near one]

ORESTES

Nay, I have a good seat

PYRRHUS

We will call the baird and be merry

ORESTES

[*Gloomily*] I have heard your baird but now

PRIEST

The stranger makes minstrelsy himself, as many
chieftains may

ORFSTES

Ay, give me a goblet, and I will sing I am but
a rude singer, but my songs may perchance be new

PYRRHUS

Take him the wine [*They bring wine and a lyre*

ORESTES

There are two songs running in my ears this hour
past, and I know not fully even yet which of the
two is better

PYRRHUS

Let it be something joyful, meet for a feast day

ORFSTES

I fancied before that one of my songs was very
joyful, but now methinks there is no joy at all in
either

PYRRHUS

[*After looking at him questioningly for a moment*] Then give us a good straight battle-piece, with no cowards in it, and no slaying by stealth

ORESTES

[*Excitedly*] That it shall be! No cowards, no slaying by stealth, and a clean, hard fight! Ay, and it is the easier too!

PRIEST

You will call first upon the god, stranger

ORESTES

Assuredly, and the god can choose the end of the lay

[*Chanting*

"Lord of Man's hope, whom no man worshippeth,
Heart of his fears, and burthen of his breath,
Queller of hate and love, hear, O Most Strong,
Most Writhful and Unrighteous, hear, O Death!"

MEN-AT-ARMS

Good words! Good words!

PRIEST

God avert the omen!

[*He goes and does purifications at the fire*

ALCIMEDON

On his own head ! By Thetis ! this stranger has
run over with evil words ever since he came

PYRRHIUS

Choose another song, Sir Stranger ! Men like not
the name of Death

ORESTES

Not death ! Shall I sing of women, then ? They
come nearest [Chants

" O Light and Shadow of ill things that be,
O Beauty, wild with wreckage like the sea,
Say who shall win thee, thou without a name ?
O Helen, Helen, who shall die for thee ? "

ALCIMEDON

[Starting up] Now, by Thetis, stranger, in shape
God has made you kinglike, but within a very fool !

HERMIONE

[Pitously] My mother Helen never wished the
men to die !

ORESTES

My singing mislikes you, old man ? Or is it women
that like you not ?

ORESTES

[*Tu anq'ing the lyre carelessly and implouring*
 "Great were our sires, and feeble folk are we!"
 A strong king and a wise was Æacus,
 And Zeus his father helped him in his need,
 And Pelops, Lord of Hellas, loved him well!"

ALCIMEDON

[*Grumbling*] Æacus was no vassal of Pelops!

ORESTES

"The son is weaker weaker than the sire!
 And Peleus he begat, a goodly king,
 Albeit he stabbed his brother on the sand,
 And wandered from his house, and begged, and
 lied,
 And vowed a goddess held him to her breast"
Murmurs in the hall Orestes pauses and
dwells

PYRRHUS

[*Under his breath*] Does the man seek for strife?

ORESTES

"The son is false, false than the sire!"—

ANDROMACHE

The other men take arms and growl
 HIRMIONE starts up, clasping her head with
 both hands, and staring in terror before her
 OI ESTES stays quietly seated

ANDROMACHE

[Rushing before PYRRHUS] Your oath, O King!
 Your pl^cdgcd hand! He is our gaest!

PYRRHUS

[Ch^eling himself suddenly, then turning upon her]
 Whose guest? You brought him here—you give the
 baib to his mocking! [To the men] Back, men!
 [To ANDROMACHE] Who taught him to revile my
 house?

ANDROMACHE

Nay, I have told him nothing

MAID OF HERMIONE

He has been tell ing homs and hours with the Lady
 Andromache

ANDROMACHE

I know him not I think he is mad

BOTW MAIDS OR HERMIONE

Bewitched, perchance!

[Humours of assent and dissent]

PYRRHUS

Peace, hounds! [To ORLSTES] Sir Guest, this woman has saved you, else, oath or no oath, had I slain you where you stand!

HERMIONE

[Starting from her stupefaction] What is that in the bowl?

PYRRHUS

What bowl?

HERMIONE

The bowl of your blood gifts

[Pointing to it]

PYRRHUS

My blood gifts! [Goes to the bowl, then turns furiously on ANDROMACHE] Woman, who give you this gold?

ANDROMACHE

No man gave me gold The stranger cast a pendant of his chain to add to the blood gifts, for pity, lest the boy should be slain

PYRRHUS

Pity of the boy!—'Tis a plot—a plot to shame me past all enduring!

FIRST MAID

She witched the gold out of him !

PRIEST

King, King, hear me ! She has witched the Queen's womb long ago, and witched the whole harvest . She has this day witched your own boy to consent to your dishonour , she has witched this mad stranger to give her gold worth twenty oxen , yea, she has witched both him and you, so that he stands up and flouts you in your hall . You are stripped naked, O King, for men and dogs to walk upon, that Hector in his grave may be merry !—Judgment, O son of Achilles, judgment !

ANDROMACHE

Yea, judgment, my King ! I, too, crave judgment
Only let not these be my judges—

PRIEST

Who is she to say how she shall be judged ?

ANDROMACHE

Judge me yourself, O Pyrrhus, son of Achilles ! even now, in your anger , and I fear not . Oh, my King, you who know me, say if I have hated you !

PRIEST

A witch has no right to speak Let her be bound outside at the gate till she is judged

ALCIMEDON

Not speak? What law is this, Priest?

PRIEST

Not a witch! She will bind the King's heart, so that he cannot judge her

PYRRHUS

[*After a moment's hesitation*] By Zeus in heaven, it is the truth! I cannot judge her while she stands looking at me Begone, woman!—Nay, touch her not!—Let her go to her own house

ANDROMACHE

I go, my King Yet if you stay me and to-morrow wake sorrowful, bethink you there is no cure for that sorrow!

[*Exit ANDROMACHE*

MOLOSSUS

Mother, I will come too!

ALCIMEDON

[*Stopping MOLOSSUS at the door*] To sanctuary!

Not to your own house! Take sanctuary, both, at
the altar of Thetis, till his fury is over

[Exit Molossus]

ORESTES

[Who during the interruption has mounted on
the bench, taken the suit of arms from the
wall, and armed himself, here leaps down,
picks up the lyre, and sings again—

“The son is viler, viler than the sire!”

ALCIMEDON

The man is armed!

ORESTES

[Continuing amid general confusion

‘Achilles’ son slew women and slew babes,
But quailed before the blood wrath of a churl,
And stole mother’s bride, and fled, fled, fled!’

[Tumult in hall]

ALCIMEDON

Down with him!

PYRRHUS

Slay him not! Break his spear and thrust him
out!

ORESTES

Will nothing sting you? Lo, mine was the bride
he stole, and from me he fled! For he dured not face
the wrath of Orestes, nor the spear of Agamemnon's
son

PYRRHUS

Orestes!

PRIEST

Is it Orestes?

ALCIMEDON

He must have men behind him! To the watch-tower quick!
[Two retainers run out, r

HERMIONE

He lies, he lies! Do I not know Orestes?

PYRRHUS

Is it not Orestes? Who is it?

HERMIONE

This is some poor half-mad, wandering minstrel
man I know him not He is not Orestes!

A VOICE FROM THE WATCH TOWER

There are no men near the castle

ALCIMEDON

Well, strike him down !

HERMIONE

What profit to break the guest-oath for such as he ? He is not Orestes !

PYRRHUS

Now, the Furies that haunt Orestes dog you, woman if you lie !

[ORESTES gives a cry]

PRIEST

If he be mad, it were a great sin to slay him And the god has been strong in him to day

HERMIONE

[After gazing at ORESTES steadily] May the Furies that haunt Orestes be over with me if I lie [Recklessly] Is that enough ? If you would have another oath, behold, I will go this night to the altar of Thetis —

PYRRHUS

Hush, Queen, lest the goddess hear !

HERMIONE

[Continuing] And there by the altar I will swear oaths, and Thetis may work upon me what she will !

PIRRUS

Nay, daughter of Helen, no such wild words! I mistrust you not—Guest, get you gone in peace

ORLSTES

[*Subduced by mention of the Furies*] I go, not fearing you, but lest I see Them I am no guest of yours [Throwing down armour] Take back your shield and helmet Aught else I have hid from your hands, my gold will more than repay [With honor] Apollo, Averter of Evil! keep them back!—Oh, why did you not slay me while you might?

[*Exit ORESTES*

A RETAINER

Shall we not stone him from the Court?

PRIEST

He is possessed! Stricken of God! Touch him not if you fear the gods' anger

HERMIONE

[*Terrorified, staring in front of her*] No, no, I see nothing!

END OF THE SECOND ACT

THE THIRD ACT

SCE^NE As in Act I Night ANDROMACHE on the steps of the altar of Thetis, with MOLOSSUS asleep Enter from the back, one after another, three armed men, with bows and arrows as well as spears, they pass silently behind rocks or bushes and disappear Enter ORESTES, armed, by path at back a MAN comes from behind a rock to meet him

ORESTES

Is the w^tch set?

MAN AT ARMS

Everywhere

ORESTES

And the path to the smp safe?

MAN AT ARMS

Yes We have but to wait till they are drawn off from the castle

ORESTES

Which way will Pylades lure them?

MAN AT-ARMS

He will feign flight northwards, to leave our way clear to the ship

ORESTES

Good One thing more If I be stricken here, waste no men's lives for me Make your way back to the ship

MAN-AT-ARMS

Prince, we have our orders for this night's work from Pylades We leave you not

ORESTES

Nay, what worth is a dead body, or who can hurt it?

MAN-AT-ARMS

Hush! What was that?

Steals back to his ambush ANDROMACHE has made some movement ORESTES peers towards Castle, L, in darkness, then, turning, sees that there is a woman at the altar

ORESTES

Daughter of Helen, why at the altar? Whom do

you fear so sore? [No answer He comes nearer and sees Molossus lying] What does the boy here?

ANDROMACHE

It is the stranger! Come you to seek me, or what more has chaneed?

ORESTES

Is it you? You?—Is the boy asleep?

ANDROMACHE

We have waited here so long, and have heard no word, good or evil

ORESTES

But why hide you here?

ANDROMACHE

We have taken sanctuary from the wrath of the King and Queen, my guest

ORESTES

Call you me still your guest?

ANDROMACHE

Nay, you are still my guest till you leave the land, and the King's wrath will perchance be cooled to-morrow

ORESTES

Why did you not let them slay me in the hall?
 'Twas your own folly I sought no hurt to you
 Speak, think you an altar will hold me back, or your
 blood stain deeper than my mother's blood?

ANDROMACHE

Who are you that speak like this? And what will
 my death profit you?

ORESTES

Spoke I not loud enough in my enemy's hall? I
 am Orestes

ANDROMACHE

[Amazed] Clytaemnestra's son! [Coming towards
 him] Oh, now I understand your face! Give me your
 hand Whether that old stain be yet purged or
 no——

ORESTES

'Tis hidden and buried, rather, with much new
 blood over it [Keeping back his hand

ANDROMACHE

It is such a one as you I have long prayed for, to
 be a friend to my child and me

ANDROMACHE

ORFSTES

Why should I be your friend? I want no friends

ANDROMACHE

Listen You and I have had more grief than others We have seen beyond the glory of battle, beyond the joy of the conqueror and the shame of the conquered—Priam and Hector saw before they died

ORFSTES

I know the battle, and I know the shame I have seen nought else

ANDROMACHE

The King has had but little sorrow, he has conquered always, and taken glory in his misdealing

ORFSTES

Behold he will soon taste the other side of glory

ANDROMACHE

It may be But none he e, save old Alcimus, know aught of suffering I have long prayed that some man should come here who had suffered from the hurts he had done, and learnt to pity men and

women And if the King's feet are set fast and cannot be turned, at least there is my son

ORESTES

Woman, I am come to slay the King and your son !

ANDROMACHE

[Calmly] Slay them ? But why ? Why ?

ORESTES

To take their kingdom, as others have taken mine !

ANDROMACHE

But is all the grief wasted that the gods have sent you ? Can you not forget past evils and live in peace ?

ORESTES

In storm I can forget them Peace is all anguish to me

ANDROMACHE

And what will a kingdom profit you ?

ORESTES

I am a king's son, I must have my kingdom

ANDROMACHE

Oh, you kings and kings' sons, you dwell like wolves in your castles I have heard many a ploughman at his ploughing sing with gladness, but seldom, seldom, a king's son

ORESTES

Wolves must live in the wolves' way, and they have their own gladness, too

ANDROMACHE

You may know them by the howling of their misery in the night! God grant my boy may never be a king!

ORESTES

Shall I slay him, then, as they bid me? Or would you that I should take him away, where there are no kingdoms? My ship is in the bay, and lacks not for plunder

ANDROMACHE

Better that you should slay him now, where he lies

ORESTES

Is he asleep? [He bends tenderly over MOLOSSUS, then recovers himself, and speaks in a harsh troubled voice] Why is it that you fear me not?

ANDROMACHE

Why should I fear you?

ORESTES

Do you trust to these gods? For I reck little
of them

ANDROMACHE

Nay, my gods are vanished and powerless long ago,
and these are but my enemies' gods

ORESTES

Then what defence have you against me?

ANDROMACHE

I need no defence You and I are friends

ORESTES

How, friends! I am charged to slay you also

ANDROMACHE

You will not slay me

ORESTES

How can you know what I myself know not yet?

ANDROMACHE

You have no peace to see your own heart, but I
can see it

ORESTES

How have you learnt it?—Woman, they may well
speak of your sorceries!

ANDROMACHE

I have no sorceries. This is a simple thing. We
slaves learn to read men's moods in their eyes and
voices, because their moods bring life or death to us.

ORESTES

Then why do you not fear me the more? [Roughly]
You have never seen my heart!

ANDROMACHE

He who has seen beyond the glory of bloodshedding
may soon see beyond the hardness of man's heart.

ORESTES

[Troubled—roughly] I know my own heart!

ANDROMACHE

The gods' hearts may be hard, but man's is tender,

only very hungry, and sore afraid, and wild as a hunted beast on the mountain

ORESTES

Know you your Queen's heart?

ANDROMACHE

Not bad, but starving. And she thinks, perchance,
that the grief of others will feed it

ORESTES

[Absent—bending and touching the boy's hands]
He is very cold

Enter HERMIONE, hooded and wrapped, hurriedly

HERMIONE

[To herself] Is there no one?—Oh, I dare not!

[ORESTES steps quickly out from behind the trees]

HERMIONE starts in terror

ORESTES

Welcome, daughter of Helen!

[HERMIONE does not answer, but stands, breathing
hard with relief]

ANDROMACHE

ORESTES

Throw back your hood — Ye gods, she is passing
beautiful!

HERMIONE

Take me quick to the ship Quick, quick!

ORESTES

It is not yet time My men must draw Pyrrhus
away from the castle

HERMIONE

He has gone Nay, take me quick—Orestes—

ORESTES

Why do you tremble so? What is it?

HERMIONE

That oath I swore—

ORESTES

You have not heard Them?

HERMIONE

I know not There seemed shapes at the edge of
the trees

ORESTES

Shapes! [Looks at her close] No, you have not seen them

HERMIONE

[With horror] Is the sight of them written on men's faces?

ORESTES

Speak not of them!—You have neither seen nor heard

HERMIONE

It is only now, and here, that I am afraid Take me to the ship now, and when once it is over—

ORESTES

When Pyrrhus is slain?

HERMIONE

And the other—[clinging to him]—oh, then we shall be safe and at peace

ORESTES

The boy? Why do you fear him?

HERMIONE

[Absentmindedly] The boy? He is the king's son

ORESTES

But why do you *fear* him?

HERMIONE

It is not the boy I fear

ORESTES

Who, then?

HERMIONE

It is the woman

ORESTES

[*Repelled*] And what fear you from *her*? I care not to slay a woman and a child

HERMIONE

I can never breathe in peace while she is there!

ORESTES

[*Sternly*] What has she done?

HERMIONE

[*Speaking in vague, troubled tones*] When she is near me, even if I know it not, her breath runs in my blood and makes me tremble [She is trembling]

ORESTES

Be still! Say what she has done If she has done you a wrong I will slay her

HERMIONE

[*In the same way*] I might have borne her eyes perchance in my own country, with friends near me, but here, all alone——

ORESTES

What has she done?

HERMIONE

[*In the same way*] I meant no hurt to her for her sharing the king's bed But when first I saw her and she looked strught into me, there was something that turned my heart sick and dimmed my eyes

ORESTES

How can I slay her for dreams like these? I know nought of your heart, but I can see your beauty She has not hurt that

HERMIONE

Can you not see a dimness over my face, where it once was bright—and a radiance in hers?

ORESTES

[*Reflecting*] There is a radiance, although she is so sad

HERMIONE

Where get she that radiance? It is not hers. It is the joy and sunlight she has sucked out of me!

ORESTES

[*Looking at her coldly*] I can see no cloud in your face

HERMIONE

[*Passionately*] No, no, you cannot see. I am retting, shrivelling, dying within, and only she can see how I die!

ORESTES

All flesh must decay. Tell me one deed of hate she has done, and I will slay her.

HERMIONE

She has made me childless, that her child may be king!

ORESTES

[*To himself*] And Helen never faded at all

HERMIONE

Childless, barren—barren of womb and of heart!

—I had courage and strength to be good sons,
till she sapped it from me to feed her son Nay,
there is another thing——

ORESTES

[Coldly] What?

Hermione

No, no, you do not believe me! I cannot say it

ORESTES

You speak such wild things

HERMIONE

I know not why I am so wild now, and anger
you—When she is near, it makes me wild and
cruel, but now, I know not why this should come
over me

ORESTES

Great Zeus! if it should be true!—Andromache,
Andromache, speak and answer her

HERMIONE

Is she here? [ANDROMACHE comes out from the trees
by the altar] Averter of Evil, what is that?

ANDROMACHE

I am but your handmaid, I have done you no hurt

HERMIONE

Nay, now you can see it—the thing I dared not say!

ORESTES

What is it?

HERMIONE

She is no live woman! See! she is dead and sucks the blood of the living Why is she not afraid, like a live woman?

ORESTES

[*Troubled*] She is deathly white Why she has no fear I know not

ANDROMACHE

What can I answer? The King might slay me, but not this man

ORESTES

It was the same but now, when I held death over her

HERMIONE

She has passed through death! She has no fear, no anger, as the living have Why does she never

ask for anything? [Almost beside herself with terror] Faugh! the smell of death clings about all her garments! Kill her, kill her! [ORESTES looks at HERMIONE with a shudder HERMIONE, breaking down, continues] Oh, friend, friend, I was not like this in Sparta

ANDROMACHE

Queen, I know my heart is with the dead of Troy
Why should that anger you?

ORESTES

[Looking at HERMIONE] In very truth there is a shadow come over you You seem to be shrunken, and scarce so wondrous beautiful

HERMIONE

[In a weary frightened voice] Kill her, kill her!

ORESTES

I know not—

HERMIONE

You have eyes Can you not see there is a fiend working in me?

ANDROMACHE

There is no fiend Queen, Queen, why are you so full of hate?

ANDROMACHE

HERMIONE

'Tis your spells have done it! Before I came here
I never hated any one

ORESTES

[To ANDROMACHE] Know you not any excuse why
she should hate you?

ANDROMACHE

Nay, stranger, why do men hate?

HERMIONE

She has made me feel that I am vile Slay her, or
I go back to the King

ORESTES

Pylades most like is dead If I do slay her will
you come away with me?

HERMIONE

Away? To the ship? Yes, till we come back
and take the kingdom!

ORESTES

I will not take your kingdom!

HERMIONE

Is it the boy you fear to slay?

ORESTES

My kingdom must be an ever changing kingdom
 I dreamed for an hour that I might stay and rest like
 other men

HERMIONE

And why not?

ORESTES

There be Those watching that will not let me rest

HERMIONE

Those watching? But you have not seen them?
I have not seen anything! [To herself]

ORESTES

Not now Few men have ever seen them, but I
 hear their wings on the wind And perchance if I
 stayed long in one place——

HERMIONE

I hear nothing [Listening] No, it cannot be
 wings on the wind! Oh!

ANDROMACHE

Nay, there is no sound at all Be not so terrified

HERMIONE

I cannot stay here alone! Oh, I care not for the kingdom

ORESTES

We are exiles for ever, both!

HERMIONE

Nay, if you love me I can beu anything, if any one will love me

ORESTES

I know not if I love or hate you It was for your passing beauty I came, because your eyes beckoned me through the dark of the sea

HERMIONE

Oh, take me, that is all the love I want!

ORESTES

Like those two stars that men call Helen's brethren immortal, never fading—

HERMIONE

Oh, I am fading fast, but, perchance, if the spell were off me—

ORESTES

Nay, you shall never fade There is a blue sunlit
island, waterless, desolate— Heli me, daughter of
Helen, ageless and deathless!

HERMIONE

I hear

ORESTES

Some sunset when you are beautiful like a dream
I will set you on that bright island, and fill my eyes
full And then I will go my ways alone, and the
fairest of earthly things shall be mine for ever

HERMIONE

What do you mean?

ORESTES

No man shall ever see you fade from your loveliness The gods may take you even as they took
Helen

ANDROMACHE

Oh, he is mad! Queen, Queen, go back while
there is time

HERMIONE

[*Shrinking back*] I should die! I am afraid!

ORESTES

Die? Of that I know not. Only never, never
fade, perfect for ever without age or waining!
Daughter of Helen, will you come with me?

[*A sound of arms outside. They start.*

HERMIONE

Oh, quick! I am yours. Do with me what you
will.

ORESTES

Come [Sound again] What is that?

VOICE OF PYRRHUS

Andromache! Ho! snake of Phrygia, starve at
the altar if you will! Your plotters are all fled!

[ORESTES stands in posture of defence. HERMIONE
shinks back]

ANDROMACHE

[To Molossus] Cling fast! [Rushing from the
altar towards Pyrrhus] Back, my king! Keep
back!

HERMIONE

[To Orestes, with a cry] Now, now!

[Hides her face]

MOLLOSSUS

[*Waking up slowly*] Is that father coming?

PYRRHUS

[*Entering and grasping Andromache*] Think you
to die so easily? You shall speak first and tell all!

ANDROMACHE

There is an ambush! Keep back!

[*Pyrrhus stands with his sword drawn over her*

PYRRHUS

[*Looking up*] More treachery?

ORESTES

Why is the son of Achilles away from the battle?

PYRRHUS

You? Pirate! Because your men fled so fast and
so far My servants have chased them twenty fur-
longs from here Yield!

ORESTES

[*Loud*] No man shoot nor stir! [As before] Your
Myrmidons may be twenty furlongs from here, my

men are in these thickets to right and left What sought you here? Was it to slay Andromache?

PYRRHUS

I sought that when I came Now I need more

[He poises his spear] ANDROMACHE slips back
to Molossus at the altar

ORESTES

[Not raising his spear] Nay, it was I that should have slain Andromache Go your ways! I only take back my own bride

[Pointing to HERMIONE, whom PYRRHUS now sees for the first time]

PYRRHUS

It is Orestes!—But the queen vowed— And that oath! Oh, perjured! perjured!

HERMIONE

[To the rocks and thickets] O ye in the ambush, strike him down! Strike him down! Oh, what is that rushing on the wind?

[Puts her hands over her ears as though in terror]

ORESTES

The oath is fulfilled upon her !

ANDROMACHE

[Close to Pyrrhus] My lord, my lord, wait and let him speak It is he that asks you, so there is no dishonour [He glances at her] Nay, you may shun me after if I have done wrong And his men are crowding behind these bushes and rocks

PYRRHUS

[In a war chant] The wolves set an ambush, set an ambush for the lion, and the lion feasted for many days ! Ho, Myrmidons !

ORESTES

They hear you not Go back !

[He grasps his spear for defence, Pyrrhus draws his sword and starts forward]

VOICE

[From behind the rocks] Now, men of Mycenae !

[A shower of arrows strikes Pyrrhus]

ANDROMACHE

It is a murder, a coward's murder !

[Pyrrhus staggers to the altar and falls]

ANDROMACHE bends over, tending him
Molossus, with a cry, snatches Pyrrhus'
sword and flies at ORESTES, who disarms him
at a blow

ORESTES

Hold the boy! Hurt him not!

HELMIONE

[In a stupefied tone] His blood is running down
the steps of the altar!

PYRRHUS

Where is Molossus? Boy, if you leave these dogs
unpunished—

ANDROMACHE

Nay, curse him not! Oh, my lord, if you have
ever loved him, curse him not! Let him be free, he
will do all that is well

PYRRHUS

[Faintly] Andromache? Ay, then, so be it. It
is the same in the end. I am glad I did not slay
you, Andromache. [Dies]

HELMIONE

[Is before] His blood is trickling into the mark of
the footprint of Thetis! [Wildly] Ah, drag him

away, or it will be a curse upon us! He must not die at the altar!

ORSTES

I never slew him I will not touch a man dying at an altar Andromache, touch him not, he will haunt you

HERMIONE

She is not afraid of the haunting of the dead See, she is whispering in his ear She is doing witch work to bring him back [Crossing to ANDROMACHE, who is still bending over Pyrrhus' body, and kneeling to her] Nay, in the goddess's name, Andromache, do not wake him! I have wronged you much, but I will make amends, I will set you free He would never have done that Only, do not whisper to him! Do not call him back to haunt me!

ANDROMACHE

Hold your peace, traitor and coward! If I could bring him back, think you I would stay my voice for you?

HERMIONE

O God! And the noise on the wind is nearer and nearer!

ORESTES

[*To HERMIONE*] You did not slay him Even if he does wake he will only haunt them that slew him

HERMIONE

He saw them not, he knows them not He has only seen you and me [*Rapidly*] Oh, in God's name it is too much! The sound of Their wings is all about me, and if I dared look, I know I should see Their faces It is more than one woman can bear If he wakes I shall go mad!

ORESTES

It is done now We will fly in the ship quickly, he will never follow us over the seas

HERMIONE

[*As before*] She will show him the way! Oh, she will have no pity! I have sought so long to slay her She would not spare me now for all the treasures of Egypt I knew well I should have no peace till I saw her dead —Oh, woman woman! bend not over him, whisper to him no more!

ANDROMACHE

I will whisper no more, I will cry aloud—in dead

ears, as I have cried all my life ! [To PYRRHUS] O thou who hearest me not, who hast never heard me, I call again to thee, let there at last be peace ! If thou hast found thy sleep, oh, cling to it ! Never wake nor stir to follow these who murdered thee !

HERMIONE

What does she mean ? It is all magic She means that he is to follow us !

ANDROMACHE

The living have never heard me, and the dead cannot hear, but broken and dying men know the words that I speak Remember the one moment before utter death, when thine eyes were opened to see and thine ears to hear Remember that, and forget the long waste of days before !

HERMIONE

She bids him remember !—He will awake I can feel that he will wake and follow us !

ANDROMACHE

By the bitter hate wherewith once I hated thee , by the blood in the streets of Troy and the death-cry of Hector's child , by the love wherewith I have loved

thee in spite of all—[*the body mores*]—and love thee still—

HERMIONE

[*With a shriek*] O God! He is waking! [*Groelling in terror and hiding her eyes*] Oh, smite off his feet that he shall not pursue, and his hands that he may never lay hold of me!

ANDROMACHE

Before thy soul is fled far away, hearken to me and put away thine hatred

HERMIONE

[*As before*] Smite off his hands and his feet!

ORSTIUS

She is not crying him to waken She is bidding him rest in peace and not harm us

HERMIONE

It cannot be that, it cannot I have hated her too sore It is all witchwork or else madness

[*She looks up and sees the sword, suddenly clutches it and moves towards ANDROMACHE*

ANDROMACHE

And afterward go and seek Hector, and he will

tell thee more, for he was wiser and greater than other men. And some day this woman, too, will be broken and dying, and then she will see what thou and I have seen, and will know what mercy is.

[HERMIONE stabs her] Ah!

[ANDROMACHE falls over the body of PYRRHUS
ORESTES starts forward and grasps HERMIONE

ORESTES

[To the men holding Molossus] Hold this wild beast! Let the boy free

[ORESTES and Molossus bend together over the body of ANDROMACHE. The men-at-arms seize HERMIONE

MOLLOSSUS

Mother, speak!—Is she dead?

ORESTES

No, but there is death in her face

MOLLOSSUS

Mother, mother, speak!

ORESTES

[Standing up] We know what she would say——

Young King of Phthia, I never sought to slay your father, and for this woman, I would give all my wealth to have her alive again—But I will make atonement take all my gold—[takes off his chain, and throws it at Molossus' feet Molossus stands silent]—and this dagger likewise There is a bright stone in the hilt that keeps off the venom of snakes [Molossus is still silent] And my cloak was woven by women of Sidon [Throws down the cloak]

MOLOSSUS

[In a struggling sullen voice] It was not you that slew her

ORESTES

Is it the woman? There is your sword [Picks it up and gives it him To the men holding HERMIONE] Hold back her arms, men, that the King may slay her as he will!

[The men bring forward HERMIONE, dazed and stupefied, they hold her so that either breast or throat may receive the sword

MOLOSSUS

Oh, take her away, or I will verily slay her! Let her never set foot upon this land again

ORESTES

Begone with her to the ship!

[*The men move off with her*

HERMIONE

[*Suddenly struggling*] I will not go! Let me free!
I will stay and he shall slay me!

[*The men drag her off*

ORESTES

And for mine own atonement [*He looks round*]
Men, get you gone!—If you would have more, here
is my sword, and here is my shield, and my helmet
[*He lays the arms one by one at MOLOSSUS' feet*]
My men are all gone The rest is for you to

MOLOSSUS

[*Looking at ANDROMACHE*] I will
will have peace

[*Kneels down*]

Peace let it be

MOLOSSUS

I never saw her looking so full of happiness

ANDROMACHE

[*Half raising herself, with a radiant smile*] Hector !
Hector !

THE END